

agreeing with them, however, frequently, but often differing from them, with the result of admitting some of our weakest claimants to recognition, while some of those best entitled to such treatment are reduced to pure synonyms! In not a few instances, however, he has exercised his conservatism with excellent discrimination. As in former volumes, binomials are applied alike to species and subspecies, the latter being distinguished by the prefix "Subsp." and a Greek letter. This is the case when the latter are recognized only provisionally, even as "races," and affirmed to be merely "connecting-links."

Here and there are to be noticed some singular rulings involving the principle of priority, as for example, at p. 175, where *Fringilla maderensis* is described as a new species, to be followed on the next pages by "subspecies," described thirty to sixty years earlier, of this new "species," namely: "Subsp. α . *Fringilla morelleti* [Pusch. 1859,]," and "Subsp. β . *Fringilla canariensis* [Vieill. 1817]," all being insular forms of a common stock. We have also *Acanthis exilipes* (Coen, 1861), with a subspecies of it, *hornemannii* (Holbøll, 1834), described nearly thirty years earlier!

The volume, however, like its long series of predecessors, is too valuable a hand-book, and in general too excellently done, to render criticism a gracious task.—J. A. A.

Shufeldt on the Osteology of the Icteridæ and Corvidæ.—In a memoir of some 40 pages, illustrated with two beautiful plates, Dr. Shufeldt describes in detail the skeleton of our Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna neglecta*) and compares its osteology with that of other forms of the Icteridæ and Corvidæ.* Selecting the genus *Sturnella* as a standard, he extends his comparison to not only various other forms of the Icteridæ but to the leading types of the Corvidæ, as represented in North America. The "most useful and essential characters" of some half-dozen species in each family, and also of the Fringilline genus *Calamospiza*, are tabulated, and a series of 'conclusions' are given based on the data thus provided. He expressly states that these conclusions are based wholly on osteological characters, but is careful to record his conviction that the "true affinity of forms can only be arrived at through a correct appreciation of the *entire* structure after proper comparisons have been made." He considers that *Xanthocephalus* is the nearest ally of *Sturnella*, and *Icterus spurius* the most remote, among strictly Icterine birds, while outside of the family *Sturnella* "finds its nearest relation probably in *Cyanocephalus cyanocephalus*." *Icterus* finds, as would be expected, "its nearest allies in the genus *Agelaius*." "*Molothrus*," he says, "is a genus of Finches, and as such should be placed in the family Fringillidæ, where it more properly belongs," and where he has "no doubt . . . *Dolichonyx* also belongs . . .

*On the Skeleton in the Genus *Sturnella*, with Osteological Notes upon other North American *Icteridæ*, and the *Corvidæ*. By R. W. Shufeldt, M. D., C. M. Z. S., M. A. O. U., Memb. Am. Soc. Naturalists, etc. Journ. Anat. & Phys., Vol. XXII, pp. 309-350, pll. xiv, xv.

Osteologically, *Molothrus* and *Pipilo* are not so very unlike." While all this may be true, so far as the skeleton may afford a clue to affinities, other features, we are convinced, obviously point to a decidedly Icterine affinity, rather than Fringilline, for both *Molothrus* and *Dolichonyx*, particularly the texture and general character of the plumage, their musky Icterine odor, pose, carriage and *habitus* in general. These in themselves are but superficial indices and traits of character, so to speak, which point to an Icterine ancestry, and general Icterine structure. It should be further noted that some of the exotic species of *Molothrus* make a close approach to the genus *Agelaius*, and that *Neospar*, *Curæus*, and *Leistes* are not far removed.

Among the Oscines we should not, *a priori*, look for evidence in the skeleton to decide nice points in affinity so much as to other and more superficial clues to relationship. In further illustration of this general point is Dr. Shufeldt's conclusion that the true affinities of the Magpie are Corvine and not Garruline, although this bird may be, as Dr. Shufeldt puts it, "so far as its skeleton is concerned . . . a *Crow*, pure and simple." While it is important to compare birds of allied groups in respect to minute osteological differences and resemblances, the results are obviously, as Dr. Shufeldt so strongly affirms, to be correlated with the general structure, and conclusions, respecting affinities, to be final, must rest on more than a single system of characters.

The plates give figures of skull and pelvis of *Sturnella m. neglecta* and *Pica pica hudsonica*, the pelvis of *Corvus americanus*, and the skull of *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* (two examples).—J. A. A.

Shufeldt on the Skeleton of the Carolina Rail.—Another recent paper by Dr. Shufeldt contains a detailed description of the osteology of *Porzana carolina*,* with figures of the principal elements of the skeleton. The pelvis is found to possess many points in common with that of *Geococcyx*, each having a probosis and the same peculiar pattern of the pre-acetabular portion of the ilium. Various rather peculiar modifications of other skeletal elements are pointed out.—J. A. A.

Vernacular Ornithology.† — This is a wonderful world of checks, balances, compensations, and reactionary running-gear. For example, the A. O. U. Committee has upset all the technical names of birds that could thus hardly be dealt with, and Mr. Trumbull has set up all the vernacular names that could be treated understandingly. Thus ornithology fattens and flourishes, as on loaves and fishes; for has not our author wrought a veritable miracle; namely, the filling of a 'long-felt

*Osteology of *Porzana carolina*. (The Carolina Rail.) By R. W. Shufeldt, M.D. C. M. Z. S. 8vo, pp. 16, with 7 cuts in the text. Reprinted from the 'Journal of Comparative Medicine and Surgery,' July, 1888.

† Names | and | Portraits of Birds | which interest gunners | with descriptions | In language understood of the People | by Gurdon Trumbull | New York | Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square | 1888 | 1 vol. 8vo. pp. viii, 222.